

PREFACE TO ETHERIDGE SYRIAC NEW TESTAMENT

THE SYRIAN CHURCHES: THEIR EARLY HISTORY, LITURGIES, AND LITERATURE. WITH A LITERAL TRASLATION OF THE FOUR GOSPELS, FROM THE PESCHITO, OR CANON OF HOLY SCRIPTURE IN USE AMONG THE ORIENTAL CHRISTIANS FROM THE EARLIEST TIMES.

TO THE READER.

IT did not occur to me till the following sheets had been committed to the press, that the present translation of the Gospels may possibly be considered in some quarters as an attempt to impugn the excellence of our authorized English version. Should such be the case, I would hereby earnestly disclaim any intention of the kind. My sole wish has been to offer in our own language an accurate representation of the evangelic canon, as read from the primeval days by the Christians of the East. The invaluable English version in ordinary use among us having been made from the Greek, and the following translation from a text extant in a tongue altogether different, a comparison like that now deprecated can only be instituted by a departure from the common principles of reason and equity.

At the same time I would suggest, that a collation of the one text with the other, for the purpose of ascertaining the verbal sameness or disagreement of the gospel testimony as given by two witnesses so perfectly impartial and independent, will form a profitable study to the Christian, and impart a profound conviction of the immutable integrity of the New Testament record.

I have retained the titles of the sections for public reading, merely as illustrative of some points referred to in the preceding sketches of the Syrian communions.* On every other account they would have been omitted; not only because, in certain instances, they betray a relationship to superstitions which are unworthy of the Christian name, but because they interfere with the continuity of the sacred discourse, and in some minds may tend to weaken the perception of that divine authority which reigns alone, and for ever, through the entire compass of the inspired writings.

LONDON,
September, 1846.

PREFACE

THE FOUR GOSPELS AFTER THE PESCHITO SYRIAC.

*VERITATI PRORSUS EST CONSENTANEUM, INTRA IPSA ECCLESIAE CHRISTI INITIA, VEL AB APOSTOLIS IPSIS, VEL AB EORUM DISCIPULIS, VERSIONEM SYRIACAM PROPECTAM.
EM. TREMELLIUS.*

*** THIS translation of the Four Gospels has been made directly from the Syriac. The text chiefly followed is that of Gutbir, 1664, compared with the editions of Paris, G. F. Boderiani, 1584, Walton in the London Polyglot, and Schaaf's of 1709. The rubrics for the lessons are from Walton. The object of the translator having been to offer in English an accurate representation of these venerable eastern scriptures, the version is as literal as the structure of the two languages seems to admit. From a desire to preserve the air and manner, as well as meaning, of the original, he has retained the Syrian orthography of the proper names, and has left some of the peculiar denominatives of the gospel narrative untranslated. Such are the titles of Pharisee, the Pharisees, Zadukoyee, the Sadducees, Sophree, the Scribes, Malphona, Doctor, &c. The name of the Divine Being, ALOHA, (the ALH of the Hebrew revelation,) is also left unaltered. In the expression of these names the method of the Nestorians has been followed rather than that used by the Western Syrians, because in the former the pronunciation more fully accords with the orthography.

* The "titles of the sections for public reading" have been omitted from the text.

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PREFACE TO THE REST OF THE SYRIAC NEW TESTAMENT

THE work here submitted completes the translation of the Syriac New Testament, begun in a former volume.* We may now compare the sacred text, as read in the Eastern churches for sixteen or seventeen centuries, with that which, during the same lapse of time, has been received in the West. The comparison of these independent witnesses will demonstrate the essential integrity and incorrupt preservation of the inspired documents of the Christian dispensation.

For the seeming delay which has attended the publication of the volume, an apology is due to those friends who have inquired, from time to time, for its advertised appearance. But the minute attention required by the nature of the work itself, and the circumstance, that the only time in general which could be spared for the prosecution of it has been that of uncertain intervals in the course of regular professional duties, will sufficiently account for the slowness of its progress. The former volume, on the Gospels, was prepared during a residence on the Continent, when the greater part of his time was at the translator's own disposal; but nearly all the present work has been accomplished amid the daily toils of the Christian ministry in London, and in hours which might, in some respects, have been advantageously spent in mental or bodily recreation, or repose.

At the tribunal of biblical criticism the writer respectfully prays for a kind, but impartial, judgment on the correctness or incorrectness of the translation. It is very proper for him to attest his own belief, that, through the adorable grace of God, he has been enabled to give a version in all essential respects a faithful representation of the Syriac Scriptures; did he not believe so, he would not presume to offer it: but that class of readers who, though intelligent students of the Bible, have not directed their attention to this branch of inquiry, will naturally look for a corroborative testimony to the correctness of such an estimate, that their confidence in the translation may be warranted by some competent authority. It is on this account, as well as with a view to the thankful adoption of any improvement which may be pointed out, that he would solicit this adjudication.

For the sake of rendering the work as complete as possible, there is added a translation of the Epistles and Book of Revelation, wanting in the Peschito Canon, from the more modern Syriac texts first edited by Dr. Pococke and Louis De Dieu, so as to comprise all the holy books which we receive as inspired New-Testament Scripture.

With regard to the Acts and Epistles, the edition which the translator has followed has been that of Schaaf, on account of its having long been a sort of textus receptus of the Syriac Testament throughout the theological world. This has been collated with others, as occasionally indicated in the margin. Notwithstanding the labours of learned men in this department since the time of Schaaf, we are yet in want of a critical edition of the Peschito text both of the Old and New Testaments; as likewise a uniform collection of the books of the Hexaplar Syriac, and an edition of the Harkleian New Testament, with such remains of the Philoxenian as may exist in the MSS. brought home by the late Mr. Rich, or among those with which the treasures of the British Museum have been amplified through the diligence of Archdeacon Tattam. On this subject much interest has been awakened by the preface of the Rev. Mr. Cureton's edition of the Syrian Ignatius.

In this volume we have omitted the Rubrics of the oriental lessons from the body of the text, and given them in a separate collection or index at the end. Interspersed among the Scripture itself, as in the translation of the Gospels, such matters are confessedly out of place. This first index is followed by another, which is intended to facilitate the collation of any particular portion of the Eastern and Western Testaments. (These have been omitted from the text.)

For the prologues which introduce the translation little need be said. They will be received for what they are worth. The first part condenses a variety of information which would have been very acceptable to the writer himself several years ago, and which he presumes will be welcome to some who are now at the outset of their inquiries. In the second part we enter a more elevated and more spiritual region. It is good to

* The Syrian Churches; their early History, Liturgies, and Literature. With a literal Translation of the Four Gospels, from the Peschito, or Canon of holy Scripture in use among the oriental Christians from the earliest Times. London. Longmans. 1846.

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be there! Perhaps this section would not be useless in Bible classes and family readings, as well as in the cabinet of the solitary Christian.

January 1st, 1849.

FROM THE PROLEGOMENA THE APOSTOLICAL ACTS AND EPISTLES FROM THE PESCHITO SYRIAC.

As with the Gospels already published, the following version of the Acts and Epistles has been made directly from the Syriac. We have Latin translations of the Peschito, by Sionita, De la Boderie, and Schaaf; but they have not obtained the entire approval of the learned. The Latin translations in the Polyglots are not to be fully depended on. Dr. Pococke, who, as an Arabic scholar, Golius has said, was second to no man, has pronounced the condemnation of the Latin rendering of the Arabic scriptures in those great works; and with respect to that of the Peschito, Michaelis affirms, that the author, Sionita, had "executed it with the greatest inaccuracy; as almost every page betrays either hurry or ignorance, and not seldom both qualities united;" while of the translation of Schaaf it may be observed, that, though not liable to this sweeping charge of inaccuracy, it is not sufficiently idiomatic to be a true representation of the Syrian Testament. It is with the utmost diffidence that I offer this effort in our own language. Should it assist any of my fellow-disciples in their inquiry into the meaning of the divine oracles, the solitary toil of some years will not have been in vain. I have endeavoured to render the Syriac as literally as the structure of the two languages would allow; having been desirous, not merely of translating, in the general sense of the term, but of giving, as faithfully as possible, a delineation of the peculiar cast of expression which the inspired writings possess in this venerable text of the oriental church.

On this account, as I have observed before, the ordinary choice enjoyed by a translator between the literal and the free method of rendering his subject could not be exercised; since the translation here, to be of any specific utility to the biblical student unacquainted with Aramaic, must, of necessity, be given ad verbum. It should be such a version as that defined by a great master in the science of interpretation: "An exact image of the original; in which image nothing should be drawn either greater or less, better or worse, than the original; but, so composed, that it might be acknowledged as another original itself. It follows, that a translator should use those words, and those only, which clearly express all the meaning of the author, and in the same manner as the author." * And this has been humbly but strenuously attempted in the present undertaking, both with regard to the grammatical signification of words, and, as far as possible, their collocated order. It need not be remarked, that such a plan would not admit of an artificial elegance of style; after the manner, for example, of Castellio's Latin Testament. Had the individual now writing been ambitious of any thing of this kind, he must have sought for some more appropriate document on which to make the essay; for the task, which it has been his sacred solace as well as labour to fulfil, prohibited even a paraphrastic expression; and demanded that verbal faithfulness to the original, that scrupulous parsimony and careful pondering of words, that tenacitas verborum cum perspicuitate sententiae, which St. Augustine so commends in the unpolished Italic version; † that determination, in short, to translate literally, not diffusively; to employ such words, and those all in meaning, number, and collocation, as would best portray a true copy of the original; and, following the principle laid down by Morus, so to exhibit the author's thoughts in our own language, as to make it apparent, that, had he himself used our language, he would have expressed himself just as the translator has done. ‡ But, when we apply such a principle to the rendering of the TRUE SAYINGS OF GOD, we may well say, with the profoundest awe, "Who is sufficient for these things?"

* ERNESTI.

† AUGUSTINUS De Doctrina Christiana, lib. xi.

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THE REMAINING EPISTLES AND THE APOCALYPSE; FROM A SYRIAC TEXT LATER THAN
THE PESCHITO.
INTRODUCTION

THOUGH the Second Epistle of Peter, the Second and Third of John, the Epistle of Jude, and the Book of Revelation are not found in the New-Testament canon of the Syrian churches, the circumstance in no way seriously interferes with the plain authenticity of those productions, as integral parts of the inspired volume. The Peschito translation, in which they do not occur, was probably effected before the Second of St. Peter had travelled far beyond the region for which it had been immediately destined; before the church had pronounced any definite judgment on the limits of the canon itself; and, possibly, before the Apocalypse of St. John had been committed to writing, or the copies so multiplied as to be extensively read out of Asia Minor. I shall not occupy any of the little space which remains in the present volume by a detail of the formal evidences by which the authenticity of these particular books is established: they may be found in the prefaces of our best commentators, or in the more elaborate treatises of Jones and Lardner.¹

In relation to the present bearing of the subject, it is enough to remark, that the Syrian church itself has never denied the divinity of those books. They are quoted by its leading divines as holy scripture. Thus the Apocalypse is cited by Jacob of Edessa, though in a version different from the Syrian one now extant, and with the origin or fate of which I am not acquainted; and by Ephrem, in the fourth century; a hundred years earlier, by Hippolytus, a Bishop of Aden, who formally maintained its authority against the objections of Caius, and earlier still, in the second century, Theophilus of Antioch, in his controversy with Hermogenes, appealed to it as an inspired book.² All these authors wrote in Syriac; and the references they make to the Revelation strongly indicate the existence, so far back as the earliest of them, of a version of the book in that language. In like manner St. Ephrem quotes the Second of Peter, and the Third of John, and the whole of the Epistle of Jude. We admit that it cannot be demonstrated that there was a Syriac version of these books then extant; but as the fact of such quotations in the works of Syrian writers must be considered a presumption in the affirmative, so the manner in which they are cited leaves no doubt as to the supreme estimate of their authority entertained by the writers themselves.

It is barely possible that the text now translated into English might be identical with that made by Polycarp, the coadjutor of Philoxenus. (See Proleg. p. 33.) In this case it is evident that Thomas of Harkleia must have effected greater changes in the work which he professedly revised, than we have generally supposed; and, in fact, created a new version, rather than emended a former one. The greater likelihood, however, is, that the work before us is later than either that by Polycarp or by Thomas; though he who performed it undoubtedly laboured with the latter outspread before him; as the same principle of translation reigns through each, and instances occur in which the very same phrase is employed by both. But neither the one nor the other could approach the excellence of the Peschito. Compared with that, the version of the four epistles and that of the Apocalypse are very inferior productions. To use the language of Professor Hug, with whom every man will concur who has read the works in question, " They do not come near the Peschito either in the mode of rendering an original writing into a foreign tongue, or in the other ideas of the author. They are forced, and laboriously adapted to the letter of the text, without regard to purity of diction, and, in some instances, without a happy notion of the sense of the original" Yet an important circumstance is certain, they were made directly from the Greek; as, from a scrupulous resolution to be as literal as possible, the transla-

‡ MORUS, Dissert. De Discrimine Sensus et Significationis in Interpretando.

¹Also in HUG'S *Einleitung* ins N. T. th. 2: EICHHORN'S ditto, dritter bd.; NIETZSCHE, *Epistola Petri posterior Auctori suo contra Grotium vindicata atque asserta*. Lips. 1735. For the genuineness of the Apocalypse we have a good summary of arguments in STORR'S *Biblical Theology*, book i. sect. 3.

²EUSEB. *Eccles. Hist.* iv. 24.

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tor has sometimes appended the terminations of the cases of Greek nouns to those which had been incorporated into his own language, which knows nothing of such distinctions, and has supplied the want of a separate definite article in Syriac by rendering the Greek one by the demonstrative pronouns, hono, "this," hau, "that," holen, "these," ailen, "those;" a usage productive, in many passages, of a barbarous and unpleasant effect. nevertheless, the determined adherence of this translator to the very letter of his original, serves to give us increased confidence in the value of the work, as an exact representation of the wording of a class of manuscripts older, perhaps, than any now in being.

The version of the four catholic epistles was first brought to light in Europe by Dr. Pococke, who discovered it among the manuscript treasures of the Bodleian library at Oxford, and published it with the Greek text, and a Latin version, in a small quarto, in 1630.

It has been reprinted in the Polyglots and subsequent editions of the Syriac Testament.